Competitive Athlete Handbook

2026–2027

Our Mission

To foster enthusiasm for gymnastics while building foundations for sport and life.

Our Vision

To be the go-to organization for sports excellence and innovation in Canadian gymnastics

Our Values

Quality, Safety, Integrity

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Welcome to the OGC's Competitive Program

We're thrilled to have you at OGC! We hope you'll find it a place to make friends, achieve goals, learn valuable skills, and most importantly, have fun.

Gymnastics demands dedication, and you should be proud of your accomplishments so far. This handbook answers common questions about being a competitive OGC gymnast. For anything not covered, ask your coach.

We encourage you to share any concerns or ideas to make OGC safer, more inclusive, and more fun. Speak to your coach, another trusted adult, or a staff member—we want to hear from you!

Safe Sport

What is Safe Sport?

Imagine OGC as a place where everyone feels respected and safe all the time. That's what Safe Sport is all about! It means no one should ever experience:

- Physical harm: No hitting, pushing, or hurting anyone's body.
- Emotional harm: No yelling, name-calling, or saying mean things that make you feel bad or scared.
- Inappropriate touching: No touching that makes you uncomfortable or is not okay.
- Harassment: No bullying, teasing, or bothering someone over and over.
- Discrimination: No treating someone unfairly because of their skin color (racism), if they're a boy or a girl (sexism), if they're transgender (transphobia), or who they love (homophobia).

Your time at OGC should be filled with fun, reaching your personal best, and making lifelong friends!

What should I do if something isn't right?

If a coach, another gymnast, staff member, or anyone at OGC ever does something that hurts you, scares you, or makes you feel uncomfortable, or if you see it happening to someone else, please tell us! By speaking up, you're helping us keep OGC a super safe and fair place for all gymnasts.

Who can I talk to?

If you ever feel unsafe or see something that worries you, you should tell a trusted adult right away! This could be:

- Your mom or dad
- Your coach
- Any OGC staff member you feel comfortable with

They are here to listen to you and help you take the right steps.

Additional Safe Sport Resources:

- Gymnastics Ontario Safe Sport Resources, including how to report to Gymnastics Ontario: https://www.gymnasticsontario.ca/safe-sport-resources/
- Kids Help Phone Line: Need crisis support right away? Call or text them: https://kidshelpphone.ca/
- Abuse-Free Sport Helpline, an independent program aimed at ridding Canadian sport of all forms of harassment, discrimination, and abuse: https://abuse-free-sport.ca/
- OGC website for safe sport resources; https://www.ottawagymnasticscentre.ca/pages/safe-sport-resources/

Rule of Two

One of our Safe Sport fundamentals is the Rule of Two. You should never be by yourself with your coach or any OGC staff member. Were you alone in the gym with your coach or another adult? Tell a trusted adult.

Athletes and coaches may not communicate electronically (including email and social media) without a parent or guardian included.

Code of Conduct and Club Policies

Gymnastics is for everyone—all are welcome at the OGC. Safe Sport also includes treating your teammates and peers with respect, kindness, and acceptance.

We do not tolerate bullying, name-calling, cyber-bullying, exclusion, and discrimination.

OGC's code of conduct and club policies can be found on our website; https://www.ottawagymnasticscentre.ca/pages/about-us/policies/

Attire

Dressing appropriately for training, camps, and competition is important for your safety and comfort, and for following Provincial and National competition regulations.

Here are some general guidelines:

- Long hair should be tied up neatly in a way that does not obstruct view or risk getting caught in equipment (0.2 deduction for hair obstructing view-if ponytail touches face, hair should be in a bun)
- No jewelry except for stud earrings.
- If a coach or Program Coordinator feels an athlete's attire, hair, or cosmetic choices present a safety hazard, or they are not in line with competition/training camp requirements, they may be asked to modify their choices before being allowed to proceed with training/camp/competition.

Regular Training

- No loose clothing is permitted. During colder weather, full-coverage clothing is allowed but must be fitted. Loose apparel—including baggy T-shirts, pullovers, or sweatpants—must be avoided for safety reasons, even in colder months.
- *WAG, WAG DEV and XCEL*: A leotard with or without gym shorts or leggings.
- *MAG:* A training singlet, t-shirt, or tank top with gymnastics training pants or shorts.

Training Camps and Special Events

- *WAG:* OGC training suits and track suits. Undergarments should not be visible.
- *XCEL*: OGC competition suits, track jackets, and black leggings. Undergarments should not be visible.
- *MAG*: OGC competitive singlet, pants or shorts, and track suits.

Competition Attire

Each family is responsible for ensuring their athlete has a properly fitting uniform. You will receive information about ordering a uniform from the Program Coordinator or administration.

The following attire is required for all competitions, unless otherwise communicated:

- *WAG*: OGC WAG competition leotard, with or without OGC shorts or leggings, track jacket and black leggings.
- *XCEL:* OGC XCEL competition leotard, with or without OGC shorts or leggings, track jacket and black leggings.
- *MAG*: OGC competition singlet, shorts, pants, and tracksuit. White socks for use on high bars, parallel bars, pommels and rings.

Attendance

Regular Training

If you will be late or absent from training, please remind your parents to let your coach or Program Coordinator know. It is important for your coach to know whether or not to expect you at training.

Consistently attending your training will help you safely and incrementally develop your abilities and strength. The beginning of training is important! Being on time helps you both mentally and physically prepare yourself for a positive and productive session.

There will likely be times throughout the season when your training is cancelled or rescheduled due to bad weather, coach illness, competition schedules, etc.

Prior to Competition

For your safety, athletes are expected to attend all scheduled training sessions at least 1 week before Qualifiers or Invitationals, and at least 2 weeks before a major competition (such as Provincial championships, Eastern championships, or National Championships).

If a coach determines that an athlete has not met training expectations prior to a competition, they may choose to scratch that athlete from individual events or withdraw the athlete from competition entirely. This decision is about safety—your well-being is our top priority.

Mock Meets

Mock Meets are an important part of your psychological and physical preparation for the competition season. All OGC athletes are expected to participate in the Mock Meets scheduled throughout the season.

If an athlete is absent from a mock meet (except in the case of injury or illness), their coach may choose to scratch them on certain events or withdraw them from the upcoming competition entirely. In extenuating circumstances, the Program Coordinator will make the final decision.

Skill Safety Assessment

Prior to the competition season, the coach and/or Program Coordinator will organize a skill safety assessment to ensure all athletes are able to safely execute the skills required in their routines. All competing athletes are required to take part.

Physical Abilities Verification

Coaches and Program Coordinators use Physical Abilities Verification to personalize training programs for each athlete's specific needs and to determine readiness for competitive levels. Athletes are required to attend all scheduled verification events.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up

When you are dropped off, please come immediately inside and wait there for your training to begin. Athletes are not supervised outside of the building.

To help ensure your safety, please remain in the building until your parent/guardian has arrived for pickup.

Nutrition Breaks

You will have scheduled breaks during longer training sessions.

Please ensure you come to training with ample snacks and hydration to fuel yourself for the length of your practice. OGC is a **nut-free facility.**

Cell Phone Guidelines for Athletes

The presence of cell phones is a distraction to the training environment. You are not permitted to use or carry your cell phone into the training gym without your coach's permission.

At the discretion of the coach, coaches and athletes are allowed to use phones for educational video purposes, technical instruction, and access to floor music. Please be careful to keep other OGC members out of your video as much as possible. If you need to use your phone for a personal reason, you can be excused from the gym to do so.

Videotaping and Photography

Videotaping or taking photos to/from the lobby window is prohibited. Please let a coach or another staff member know if you witness someone breaking this rule.

Communication Pathways

Sometimes, it's hard when you don't get along with a teammate, another gymnast, or even a coach. Don't worry, we're here to help you work things out! If you're having a disagreement, feeling worried about something, or just having a problem with someone at OGC, here's what to do:

1. **Talk to your coach first.** They would be an excellent first point of contact.They can find a time to chat with you outside of practice and help you try to solve the problem.
2. **Bring in your parents/guardians.** If talking with your coach doesn't quite fix things, your coach might suggest involving your parents or guardians in the conversation.
3. **Chat with your Program Coordinator.** If the problem is still there after talking with your coach and parents, you can set up a meeting with your Program Coordinator.
4. **Meet with the Director.** If you still can't find a solution after meeting with the Program Coordinator, the next step is to meet with the Director of Programs and/or Operations. They're here to help find a way forward.

Injury and Pain Guidelines

Please **SPEAK UP** and communicate to both your coach and your parents/guardians if you are in pain!

If you have pain or an injury that persists for more than 3 training sessions, your coach will recommend to your parent/guardian that you follow up with a doctor and/or physiotherapist.

If your pain or injury meets any of the following criteria, you should seek medical attention as soon as possible:

- Pain persists for more than 3-5 days
- Pain is gradually increasing
- Pain is rated more than a 7/10
- The injured area is discoloured, hot, or swollen

Your coach has the power to hold back on your training if they feel their request for a medical opinion is not being fulfilled.

Similarly, you have the power to hold back on any training being asked of you. You know your body best. **Your body is yours, and your health is what matters most.** For more serious issues and injuries, your parents/guardians may have to fill out a return to play form before we can proceed with regular training.

Guiding Principles for Placement

The decisions behind an athlete's selection for an individual group placement, level, training hours, camps, special events, and otherwise is carefully considered by the OGC team with every athlete's long-term interest in mind. These choices weigh many elements, and we rely on the following principles, among others, to help guide us in our decision-making process.

Final decisions are determined by the coaching staff, Technical Leads, and/or Program Coordinators. We know every competitive athlete works very hard, and we make these decisions in alignment with these multifaceted considerations:

- *Safety*: Athlete safely meets the skill and physical ability requirements and, for competitions, camps and special events, is free from injury.
- *Form and Execution*: Athlete meets form, execution, and technical expectations.
- *Consistency*: Athlete consistently demonstrates the skill set during training. We also consider excessive absence from training.
- *Work Ethic and Mental Skills*: Athlete demonstrates the work ethic and mental skills required.
- *Alignment with the Long-Term Athlete Development Plan*: The LTADP is developed in conjunction with Gymnastics Canada and Gymnastics Ontario.

Competition

General Information

Competition information (call to meet, location, schedules, etc.) is available on the Gymnastics Ontario website: www.gymnasticsontario.ca.

You can check the GO website regularly for updates to find your competition schedule. Sometimes competition schedules are not posted until 2 weeks before the competition.

Parents and spectators are not permitted to contact or approach athletes, coaches, judges, or hosting officials during competition. Parents are also not permitted to be on the competitive floor, except in the case of emergency, injury, or illness.

Competition Etiquette

Arrive on Time: It is important that you arrive at the competition **at the start** of registration, as sometimes competitions begin ahead of schedule.

Sportsmanship: Cheer for your teammates! Be gracious and supportive to your fellow competitors, no matter your personal results. Everyone has worked hard to be there.

Bring What You Need: Please make sure you have a properly fitting uniform, a snack and water, and anything else you require in a grip bag/club bag (such as grips, chalk, wristbands, tape, hairspray, tape, etc). It is your responsibility to come to the competition prepared!

Strive to Embody all the True Sport Principles:

- **GO FOR IT:** Discover how good you can be.
- **PLAY FAIR:** Winning is only meaningful when competition is fair.
- **RESPECT OTHERS:** Show respect for everyone involved. Win with dignity and lose with grace.
- **KEEP IT FUN:** Find the joy of sport. Keep a positive attitude both on and off the field.
- **STAY HEALTHY:** Prioritize physical and mental health over all other considerations.
- **INCLUDE EVERYONE:** Share sport with others. Ensure everyone has a place to play.
- **GIVE BACK:** Find ways to show your appreciation for the community that supports your sport.



OGC Training Tenets

SAFETY

Supervision: You should never be on the equipment unsupervised by a coach. Tell your coach if you need to leave the gym.

Health: Wash your hands frequently, especially after you use the washroom, and before/after your snack break. Stay home from training if you are sick!

Communication: Tell your coach or another trusted adult if you are in pain, sick, are uncomfortable, or have a safety concern.

Attire: Your attire should be safe and gymnastics appropriate. Athletes whose attire and/or hair is a safety hazard may not be allowed to train, at the coach's discretion.

RESPECT

For yourself: You know your body best. Your health is what matters most.

For your peers: Everyone belongs at OGC. Be inclusive and kind to others. We do not tolerate bullying, name-calling, or exclusion.

For your coaches: Your coaches are experts; listen to their directions. Proper technique and correct progressions are an important part of learning gymnastics safely.

For the gym: Clean up your area after you train and after your snack break. Let's work together to keep the gym safe and clean!

FUN

Strive for *your* personal best!

Support your teammates!

Make friends and lifelong memories!

Learn something new!